

721 in the enemy's kraal, the oxen being mainly slaughtered for food. If the Dinka gathered reinforcements and returned to fight they were met in full battle formation. Nuer fight in three divisions with two or three hundred yards between each, and if one division is engaged the others advance or retreat parallel to it according to the fortunes of war. A party of scouts are in advance of the central division and they charge up to the enemy, hurl their spears at them, and fall back on the main body.

721
167 The raiders spent several weeks in Dinkaland and sometimes remained there throughout the dry season, living on the milk and flesh of captured cattle, on pillaged grain, and on fish. Using a captured kraal as a base they extended their raid against distant camps. Nuer migrations seem to have been conducted on these lines, the raiders settling permanently in Dinka country and by systematic raiding compelling the inhabitants to withdraw farther and farther from the points of occupation. In the following season a new series of raids was initiated and the process was repeated till the Dinka were compelled to seek refuge with their kinsfolk of another tribe and leave their country to its invaders. If settlement was not contemplated, however, the raiders returned home when they considered that they had sufficient booty.

727 Before camp was broken up there took place a custom highly indicative of Nuer sense of equality and justice. It was recognized that the whole force was jointly responsible for the success of the raid and there was therefore a redistribution of the booty. The
[92] prophet whose revelations sanctioned the raid first made a round of the camp and selected from each household a cow for the divine spirit of whom he was the mouthpiece. By this time a household possessed some fifty head, so that it was no hardship to be asked to give one to the spirit. There then took place a general scramble and everybody rushed amid the herd to earmark beasts for himself. A man who could first seize an animal, tether it, and cut its ear had absolute claim to it. The man who originally captured a cow had the advantage that it was tethered near his windscreen, but if he and members of his household had an undue share of the booty they could not earmark all the beasts before they were seized by others. As might be supposed, men frequently sustained injury in these scrambles, for if two men seized the same cow they fought with clubs for possession of it. One must not use the spear on these occasions. Men of neighbouring camps took part in one another's redistributions and there must have been great confusion. Captives, women of marriageable age, boys, and girls, were not redistributed but belonged to their original captor. Older women and babies were clubbed and, when the raid was on a village, their

824 those grasses which are *wal ghok*, cattle-grasses, and those plants
233 which are eaten regularly by cattle, sheep, and goats or are used for
veterinary purposes. One is only given names of plants with hesitation
824 or given different names by different persons when they have no
particular value or use. One should not, however, bring leaves and
flowers home and ask a Nuer for the names, for this confuses him, but he
knows them at once when he sees them growing, as he would normally
see them. Not the form of the plant alone but its form together with
its habitat enable him quickly to identify it, for some plants are found
in gardens, others on sandy ridges, others in the open plain, and others
near streams.

824 It is probable that Nuer expansion has to a considerable degree
167 been influenced by the distribution of pasture grasses. I am not
137 a botanist and can only record a few of the main grasses which are
found in both Western and Eastern Nuerland without being able to
give their distribution in these latitudes. However, Nuer have told
me that the reason they did not oust the Ngok Dinka from their
enclave was that their pastures are not up to the grazing standards
Nuer demand for their cattle. It has also been pointed out to me by
Nuer that Shillukland is very poor in grazing grasses, a statement
which seems to me, from a very slight acquaintance with Shilluk
country, to be true.

137 There are some Nuer grasses the cattle like, some they will eat if
233 they are hungry, and some which they refuse at all times. The
richness of pasture varies at different times of the year and in different
places and it is these seasonal and local variations which determine
Nuer annual, and daily, movements.

132 In the season of *Rwil*, the springtime of the year when the early
137 rains fall, all the grasses either send up new shoots or begin to grow
233 again after several months of arrested growth. This is a season of
fatness for the cattle. All the pasture grasses are short and tender
and they can choose the most luscious of them and graze on them
to their hearts' content. In this time of plenty they nibble the heads
of the grasses of which they are not greatly fond while they graze to
the ground a favourite grass like *gau* (*Andropogon Gayanus Kunth*).

Nuer¹ and Dinka customs and languages are far too similar for any doubt to arise about their common origin, but in the present state of our knowledge even a tentative reconstruction of their historical relations with each other which led to the formation of two distinct cultures is out of the question. Our knowledge of neither is adequate, and probably never will be adequate, to solve historical problems of this kind. Moreover, it is not yet certain whether the many Dinka tribes differ from each other sufficiently for some of them to approach the Nuer in their culture more closely than they approach other members of their own conglomerate, though, personally, I hold this to be highly improbable. The Atwot are a peculiar case, for they speak a dialect of Nuer but are alleged to approximate more closely to some of the Dinka tribes in other elements of their culture. On the other hand, the Jekany tribes, who to-day have a typically Nuer culture, appear to be of Dinka origin. Even were we in possession of more knowledge about both nations we should still have to face the insuperable difficulty that not only have Dinka and Nuer almost certainly a common cultural origin but that there has also been continuous contact between them which has led to extensive borrowing by the Nuer from the Dinka, and possibly the process has been mutual, so that one cannot know for sure whether a similar trait in the two cultures is due to their common cultural origin or to later borrowing.

Moreover, any attempt to differentiate between the two peoples by a comparison between their physical characters is equally dangerous until a very large number of individuals whose ancestry is well known have been measured. I have little doubt myself that there are physical differences between Nuer and Dinka, though both are undoubtedly of the same race. But we have to remember that there has been absorption of Dinka on a gigantic scale by Nuer invasions during the first half of the 19th century. At that time most of the country east of the Nile was occupied by Dinka tribes who were dispersed and largely absorbed by the Nuer who crossed the Nile in waves from their home on the west bank. To such an extent were Dinka assimilated to Nuer that I consider it safe to say that not more than 50 per cent. of the Nuer to the east of the Nile are of pure descent, and though on the west bank the process

¹ I use the word "Nuer" but with a protest. They call themselves "Nath" (sing-nas), and if ever a more ambitious account of them is written this term will be used.

167 of expansion and absorption has not been so extensive it has, nevertheless,
101 been considerable. Both Nuer and Dinka myths recognise their common
177 ancestry. It will soon be possible to see how closely their cultures approach
one another to-day, but I reserve this comparison until the data is more
abundant.

648 The Nuer have not been greatly affected by foreign influences owing
131 to their geographical environment. Slight regional differences in
environment exist, but their country is throughout hard on man and
beast since it consists of an enormous plain which for the greater part
of the year is either a parched desert or a swamp. These circumstances
make the Nuer difficult to approach and their relations with the Govern-
ment of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan have, on the whole, been broken
and unsatisfactory and culminated a few years ago in open warfare on
both banks of the Nile. Subsequently, a more deliberate policy and
more systematic control were established for the whole area. At an
early period the Nuer came into contact with Arabs, but, though this
contact was closer in some parts of Nuerland than in others, I do not
believe it anywhere deeply affected their culture.

Sketch map No. I shows the position of the Nuer in relation to
the Shilluk and Dinka. The Nuer themselves speak of those tribes
which inhabit the country to the west of the Bahr-el-Gebel as "homeland
Nuer" (*Nath cieng*) and of those tribes which inhabit the country to the
east of the Bahr-el-Gebel as "bush Nuer" (*Nath doar*), and it is con-
venient to make this distinction also by speaking of these two divisions
as Western Nuer and Eastern Nuer respectively.

II.

631 Nuerland is divided into a number of territorial sections, the occupants
649 of which form political units of the Nuer nation. These territorial
sections I will call countries and the political units which occupy them
I will call tribes. Thus, the Lou country is a territorial division of
Nuerland and the Lou tribe is a political division of the Nuer nation.
These tribes are shown on the accompanying sketch map No. II.

The published estimates of population of Nuer tribes will give
some idea of their numerical importance.

THE NUER, TRIBE AND CLAN (SECTIONS I-IV)

13

Little harm is done whichever way we speak of them so long as we clearly define what we refer to at the outset. The point to remember is that "tribe" among the Nuer is a relative term and that what we speak of as a tribe to-day may not be one in our sense to-morrow. I have even been told (by Cuol, the Government interpreter at Nasser) that there was no *cut* between Yol and Wangkac primary sections of the Gaajok tribe. He told me that there used to be blood-compensation between these two sections till so many people on either side were killed that it ceased to function. It is clear, if this is the case, that "tribe" must be relative, and to some degree an arbitrary and *ad hoc* term. The only difference between the nomenclature used in this paper and that usually employed is that I shall regard the three divisions of what is generally called the Eastern Jekany tribe, the Gaajak, Gaajok, and Gaagwang, as separate tribes. In doing this I fully realise the arbitrariness of the usage.

This continual process of segmentation in the tribe is due to the weakening of these bonds upon which the solidarity of primitive groups depends, communal life and kinship. The difficulty of pasturing and watering cattle during the dry season necessitates a sparse population to a large area. The more populous a group becomes the greater becomes this economic problem which can only be solved by its members going further and further afield to exploit more distant pastures and water supplies. This has undoubtedly been one of the causes of Nuer expansion during the last century. The result is that members of a group become less and less into contact with one another the larger it grows and the social and political solidarity of the group is consequently loosened. Thus, the tribe has the minimum of cohesion, while the small village group which lives together in dry and wet seasons is a closely knit community. The cohesion of other territorial groups between the village and the tribe varies in rough proportion to their size. As will be explained later, widening of spacial distance goes hand in hand with widening of distance in blood relationship. For even the bonds of kinship loosen when kin ceases to be localised and begin to spread over a large area, because if kin are to function as economic, social and ceremonial agents they must live together. How else can they pasture their herds in the same plains? How else can they attend the same weddings and mortuary ceremonies? How else can they act together

THE NUER, TRIBE AND CLAN (SECTIONS I-IV)

47

JINACA, one finds many members of such clans as the JIMEM, JUAK, 554
 KIEK, KWERMOANG, in every section. These clans have no longer a *wec* 614
 (a home) of their own. Thus there is a story that the JIMEM once had 619
 a big *wec* but when some of them were absent their food was eaten by their 621
 brothers. This led to a quarrel, which resulted in the dispersal of the 1777
 clan, and now, like the other clans mentioned above, they have no central
 homeland. There is, however, said to be a small JIMEM pocket near
 Lek country.

In the migration of the Nuer eastwards across the Nile there does 721
 not appear to have been any systematic colonisation, if we except the 167
 Jekany occupation of Dinkaland. Parties of warriors would raid the 614
 nearest Dinka homesteads and carry off their boys and girls and cattle.
 These warriors at first returned home with their spoil but later a portion
 of them settled down with their wives and families and built homesteads
 to the east of the Nile, where they were still in touch with their relatives
 across the river. Slowly there was a drift further and further eastwards,
 and whilst the bulk of the conquering warriors belonged to one clan
 originally there followed a steady infiltration from other clans whose
 members attached themselves to the original conquerors and settled
 among them. Also it must be presumed that before the Nuer crossed the
 Nile and conquered the Dinka country, which lay to the east of that
 river, some clans were already nuclei of political aggregation from other
 clans and from Dinka not unlike the aggregations which we find of the
 west bank of the Nile to-day. At the present time, moreover, families
 move freely about the country and attach themselves to new local groups
 into which they marry. Especially does this seem to be the case among
 the Western Nuer where there is a perfect jumble of small clan lineages.
 The link between newcomers and the lineages among which they settle
 is not so much the link of marriage as of descent, since the birth of a child
 unites the two families of husband and wife by a genealogical link and
 the sons of the wife become children of the husband's lineage and sister's
 children of the wife's lineage.

The manner in which lineages split up was well described to me by a 614
 Dok man. Members of a lineage give birth to children and they become
 numerous and spread over the countryside, wandering here and there
 and everywhere (*cihe dak piny*). Then their close relationship (*mar*)
 ends (*ci mar thuk*). They go and live in the midst of other clans who are